

are righteous in themselves, they may be mistaken in regard to the given Individual; for the one parent may not have been under the influence of such high-minded virtue, nor the other the slave of passion, as has been supposed. The conscience is in the position of a barrister, whose opinion is asked in matters of legal difficulty. In both cases the judgment given proceeds on the supposed accuracy of a representation submitted, but which may be very partial, or very perverted.

It follows—Fifthly, That there may be much uncertainty or confusion, or positive error, in the judgments of the conscience, because given upon false representations. All the actions of man are of a concrete character; by far the greater number of his voluntary acts are of a very complex nature; and so it is difficult for the individual himself, and still more difficult for a neighbour, to determine what are the precise motives by which he is influenced in any given act. The springs of human action are often as difficult to be discovered as the true fountains of the great African rivers, which rise so far in the unapproachable interior; and there is room for endless disputes as to what is the originating and original motive, without which the act would not have been purposed or performed; and when we have fixed on any one source, we are not sure that there may not be others which could dispute with it the pre-eminence.

Meanwhile the conscience will pronounce its verdict upon the action according to the representation given by the other faculties of the mind. Present a concrete action, more particularly if a complex one, under one aspect, and the conscience will approve of it; present it under a different aspect, and the conscience will disapprove of it. Let warlike achievements, for instance, be looked at in the light of deeds of chivalry, romance, and courage, and the mind will be elevated by the very contemplation of them; and the clang of the trumpet

will not so
effectually stir up the war-horse, as the narrative
of the exploits
of heroes will awaken enthusiasm. But let us now
contemplate
the same actions under a different aspect; let us
see the blood
flowing in torrents, and hamlets and cities in
flames; let us
hear the groans of the wounded and dying, and
the wails of
the widows and orphans, as the news are
brought to them of
the friends that they have lost; let us inspect
the hearts of
the leaders in the combat, and observe the
reigning pride,